

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI:

CONTINUITY IN US-ITALIAN RELATIONS EMPHASIZED

SUMMARY. ITALIAN MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S
SEPTEMBER 29 MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI EMPHASIZES
TWO POINTS: 1) THE FORMATION OF THE ANDREOTTI MINORITY GOVERNMENT
AND THE DELICATE POST-ELECTION SITUATION HAS NOT
CHANGED THE US ATTITUDE TOWARD ITALY. 2) THE US CONTINUES
TO ASCRIBE IMPORTANCE TO A STABLE AND STRONG ITALY AND
WILL THEREFORE ENTERTAIN AN ITALIAN REQUEST FOR ECONOMIC
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ASSISTANCE WITH SYMPATHY. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE LEFTIST PRESS, THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI RECEIVED FAVORABLE AND PROMINENT ATTENTION IN THE ITAIAN MEDIA. LA STAMPA'S HEADLINE, "THE US READY TO HELP US." WAS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE ECONOMIC AID ACCENT PLACED ON THE MEETING BY MOST US-DATELINED ACCOUNTS. UNITA AND AVANTI BURIED THE STORY DEEP IN THEIR ISSUES. SINCE MOST OF THE PRESS ACCOUNTS WERE EVIDENTLY BASED ON A SUBSEQUENT FORLANI PRESS INTERVIEW, WE ARE REPORTING FORLANI'S STATEMENTS AND THE ITALIAN PRESS INTERPRETATIONS IN SOME DETAIL.

2. TO MOST OBSERVERS, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MEETING LAY IN THE FACT THAT IT REPRESENTED THE FIRST CONTACT BETWEEN PRESIDENT FORD A HIGH ITALIAN OFFICIAL SINCE THE FORMATION OF THE ANDREOTTI MINORITY GOVERNMENT. COMING AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME, ITS IMPORTANCE WAS SEEN IN THE REITERATION OF THE "CONSTANTS" OF ITALIAN FOREIGN POLICY (CLOSE TIES TO THE US, NATO AND EUROPE). WRITING FOR CORRIERE DELLA SERA, UGO STILLE SAID THAT FORLANI ASSURED THE PRESIDENT THAT ITALIAN FOREIGN POLICY WAS IN NO WAY "CONDITIONED BY THE PCI". SIMILARLY, THE MEETINGS SERVED TO REASSURE THE ITALIAN SIDE THAT THE US ATTITUDE TOWARD ITALY HAD NOT CHANGED AS A RESULT OF ANDREOTTI'S "DELICATE FORMULA" AND THE NEW POST-ELECTORAL POLITICAL SITUATION.

3. FORLANI REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE HAD RE-AFFIRMED ITALY'S STRONG COMMITMENT TO A UNITED EUROPE. HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT ITALY'S EUROPEAN POLICY WAS "CHARACTERIZED BY THE CONVICTION THAT IT MUST TAKE PLACE IN COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION WITH THE US." FORLANI DESCRIBED NATO AS THE "DECISIVE, ESSENTIAL FACTOR FOR ITALIAN SECURITY." ASKED WHETHER HE HAD RAISED THE QUESTION OF EURO-COMMUNISM WITH THE PRESIDENT, FORLANI SAID THAT HE HAD TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO EXPLAIN THAT ALTHOUGH THE PCI HAD ACCEPTED NATO AS A FACTOR FOR STABILITY, THIS SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED "AS AN ELEMENT OF CHANGE OR WEAKENING IN OUR FOREIGN POLICY."

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FORLANI SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD LISTENED TO HIS EXPLANATION "WITH INTEREST."

4. ACCORDING TO FORLANI, THE PRESIDENT WAS "VERY INTERESTED IN THE ITALIAN INTERNAL SITUATION," IN PARTICULAR IN THE BATTLE AGAINST INFLATION AND RESTORATION OF BALANCE OF PAYMENTS EQUILIBRIUM AND IN DETAILS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM. FORLANI DESCRIBED THE PRESIDENT AS HAVING EVIDENCED "AN

ATTITUDE OF OPEN READINESS AND SYMPATHY TOWARD ITALY INCLUDING THE MATTER OF POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE." WHILE FORLANI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT NO DETAILED DISCUSSION ON ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE HAD TAKEN PLACE, HE SAID THAT THE "PRESIDENT HAD COMMITTED HIMSELF TO CONSIDER WHATEVER PROPOSALS ITALY MIGHT MAKE."

5. THE ITALIAN PRESS ALSO SOUGHT TO DRAW FORLANI OUT ON WHETHER THE US HAD RAISED POLITICAL CONDITIONS TO THE GRANTING OF FURTHER ASSISTANCE. ASKED WHETHER AID WOULD BE "SUBORDINATED TO A PARTICULAR COURSE IN THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION," FORLANI SAID THAT THIS HAD NOT BEEN SPELLED OUT. HOWEVER, FORLANI ADDED THAT "THE DISCUSSION NATURALLY TOOK PLACE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL LINE AND THE CONTINUATION OF THIS POLICY." VOLPE

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